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VII.

THE DOCTRINE OF ETERNAL PUNISHMENT.

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| I. The Rev. NOAH PORTER, D. D., LL. D. | IV. The Rev. HENRY W. BELLows, D. D. |
| II. The Rev. O. B. FROTHINGHAM. | V. The Rev. WILLIAM R. WILLIAMS, D. D. |
| III. The Very Rev. THOMAS S. PRESTON, V. G. | VI. The Rev. THOMAS J. SAWYER, D. D. |
| VII. Conclusion—The Rev. NOAH PORTER, D. D., LL. D. | |

I.

THE Christian doctrine of eternal punishment is proposed as a theme for friendly discussion by a few gentlemen who are supposed to hold different opinions in respect to its import and its truth. The duty has been assigned to me of opening and closing this discussion, after such a method as may promise the most satisfactory issue.

There are two aspects in which this doctrine must be viewed by every thoughtful person, each of which occasions difficulties which cannot easily be set aside. These are its ethical and exegetical aspects, or its import and its truth. The ethical side has to do with its relations to the moral nature of man, and the moral administration of God; the exegetical, with a satisfactory interpretation of the teachings of the Scriptures. Neither of these aspects can be considered apart from the other. As between the two the ethical should first be discussed. It seems necessary, therefore, that in opening I should state briefly, but clearly, a few general positions which should be distinctly recognized and carefully considered before proceeding to the examination of the evidence for and against the truth of the doctrine in question.

We shall agree in this: that man is a moral being, and as such possesses all the endowments which are requisite for responsible activity. He is personal and free. He assents to the excellence of duty, and he imposes duty upon himself as the supreme law of his inner and outward activity. The inner activities, whether they are called choices, volitions, affections, or purposes, are the springs of conduct. They are more or less permanent and con-

trolling, and hence character, as the source of conduct, is itself morally good or evil; and is that alone which makes actions to be good or bad. If man is responsible for what he does, he is preëminently responsible for what he intends; i. e., for what he is. The saying of the Great Teacher is at once true and fundamental: "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things;" and similarly, "Every tree is known by its fruit."

We assume also that God is a person in a more eminent sense than man possibly can be. If the crown and glory of the finite and dependent universe is man, with his free personality, then surely the infinite and absolute, who upholds and supplements the finite, is himself a person who is intelligent and free. He has an intellect to devise, a heart to love, and a will to choose, and these several activities are coördinated into that harmony of perfect moral goodness which is called indifferently unspotted holiness and perfect love. As a being who is perfectly good he imposes on himself the law of moral perfection, and as completely complies with this self-imposed law. But he does not confine it to himself alone. As personal, he must use his personal influence with his creatures, who are like him in nature and capable of interpreting his thoughts and emulating his character. As a being who is loving and yet good, he cannot but use this personal force for the moral perfection of others. This influence, when employed, makes God a *moral ruler*; when asserted, it becomes God's moral law.

It is questioned of late whether law and government have any significance as between God and man; whether they are not outworn fictions which formerly incased a precious kernel of ethical and spiritual truth, but which has long ago outgrown and burst the shell that is now withered and ready to fall. To guard against any misconception, I repeat what has been already implied, that no law even from God can have any moral force unless it requires such perfection as man exacts from himself. Were we to suppose that God should command anything of man which either in kind or degree man does not impose upon himself, his command would have no binding force. A conflict would at once arise between the personal influence or behest of the Creator and the moral law which the creature finds written

on his own heart. In such a conflict the creature, like Antigone, is bound to obey the law of goodness, which he dares not offend, however much he may tremble before the wrath of the Sovereign who has power to kill and make alive.

But if no such conflict exists or can be supposed; if the law is such as the man approves and imposes on himself, he will also accept and obey it as the personal will of his Creator and heavenly Father. The law gains in this way a double enforcement, the moral and the personal. It is obeyed because it is right, and also because a person who is the personification of rectitude enforces it as his personal will by the grandeur and loveliness of his uncreated majesty. Man, the creature and child of God, is therefore morally bound to accept God as his personal king and to own his government. He finds in himself the impulse to loyalty and worship as truly as the law of conscience; nay, it is the law of conscience itself which enforces the impulses of personal allegiance to the living God.

These principles prepare us to understand the nature and place of reward and punishment in the personal government of God. This is the more necessary for the reason that many object to the use of reward and punishment altogether as mercenary and demoralizing. They explain the presence of these terms and conceptions in the Scriptures as necessary figures of speech, adapted to the crude and undeveloped notions of ruder times, or as proper to a lower stage of moral culture. Even those who would accept the active personal influence of the Supreme in his moral rule, are offended at the thought of being moved to holiness by the hope of reward or the fear of punishment. As against a defective conception of both, these objections hold good, but they fail altogether when confronted by a truly ethical definition of either. If by reward or punishment is intended only a good or evil which God may effect for our sentient or selfish sensibility, the motive is unworthy and the influence immoral, or, at least, it fails to be moral. But if the force of either lies in what this good or evil expresses of the personal feeling of God, then it takes rank with the influence of conscience itself, moving in the same plane, only employing an additional force for good and against evil. It should never be forgotten, however, that the moral effectiveness of reward or punishment is not in

the medium which expresses the feelings of God, whether it be a "pavement of gold" or of "burning marl," but wholly in what these symbols effectively express, viz., the favor or the displeasure of the Being whose smile and frown are the reflex of our own for ourselves, forasmuch as man is made in God's image.

It follows that it is most reasonable to believe that reward and punishment, in this high moral import, are used in the personal government of a personal God. Every analogy forces us to infer that he, in fact, employs them. Every right-hearted man will rejoice in their use, and will accept them for himself. To assert, or infer, that the only reward or punishment which is worthy of God is the good or evil which is the natural consequence of sin and holiness in the soul of man to the exclusion of any feelings of God which these may express, is to overlook the most potent of all influences of which man is susceptible from his fellow-men and from Him who, though the highest of beings, is yet the nearest to man. The position is atheistic in its affinities and its theory of the moral universe.

On the other hand, it is equally important to insist that punishment is impossible to one who is not conscious of ill-desert, and does not accept it as just. The sky which is brightened by the sunlight of self-approval can never be wholly darkened even by the supposed frown of God. It is only so long as I am displeased with myself, and know that God is displeased with me and *for cause*, that punishment is possible. Moreover, we can suffer the keenest form of punishment only so long as we retain and reassert the wicked purpose or the wicked act. So soon as we repent and renounce both, even though God should continue to feel and express his displeasure for what we had been, we should find some taste of heaven in our present renunciation of our wicked past.

It may be questioned, however, whether the sinner, left to himself, will ever seek or find repentance and self-recovery. So far as we know anything of sin, it is self-perpetuating. It may be a law of man's being which, though not of fate, is yet as uniform as fate, that every free agent, who sins against the restraints imposed by his own moral sense and the will of God, overleaps a barrier along the pathway of goodness and of life which he will never effectually desire to recross. Every purpose

which we call sinful may, in its very nature, be permanent or eternal. It certainly shows itself to be persistent, as it gathers strength by repetition in outward act. So far as experience teaches any lesson, it teaches that moral recovery must be inspired or furthered from without. All forms of religion assume as their starting-point that man needs some such intervention, which grows out of his real or fancied exposure to punishment, and his moral weakness. It is on this assumption that Christianity rests its claim to be received as supernatural and divine. It finds and declares, but it does not make man to be a sinner, and, as such, helpless and in danger. It provides and offers a remedy, which is so completely adapted to his needs that it is impossible that it should have been devised by man, and at the same time should presume to declare that it comes from God. The remedy which Christianity furnishes, it offers for man's acceptance—it presses it upon him, but it does not compel him to take it. It offers it upon conditions, and plainly tells him that he cannot fail to comply with these conditions without loss and penalty.

What this penalty and loss may be in their nature and effect are the questions presented for our discussion. As a preliminary, I have stated the several axioms or principles which the Christian Scriptures presuppose, reaffirm, or supplement. Unless these axioms are true, a revelation of mercy and blessing is either meaningless, or useless, or impossible. We do not say that the Scriptures reaffirm these truths in form, but that they imply their authority by declarations, examples, and actions, which take them for granted. These truths are the overhanging firmament of azure out of which one star after another emerges to meet man's longing gaze for light from above and beyond. Against this background they are all projected. The background itself only ceases to be discerned or noticed when the sun arises and floods the heavens with its excess of light.

If we must assume these ethical truths to assure ourselves that the Christian revelation is from God, we must also use these truths in interpreting the import and application of its declarations. Against this same background of eternal love, which is but another name for eternal justice, must we read all the sayings in the revealed word that are dark or enigmatical concerning man's future, whether by reason of the shadowy or figurative import of

words, the significance of images, or the historic surroundings under which they were uttered : all these we interpret by what we know to be true of man as moral and free, of God as his loving Father and just ruler, of the needs of man as under bondage to a wicked will and habits of evil, and of his capacities for suffering from the inherent nature of evil and the deserved and manifested displeasure of God.

Whatever representations we find of man's weakness or depravity and danger, whatever high-wrought pictures of God's anger, or its continuance, we must hold fast to the primal truths which make God dear to our affections as our pitying Father or venerable as our holy Judge. It is because we believe that God is morally perfect, that we assert that he would delight to receive honor and love from all his creatures, that he uses all the means for the triumph of goodness and the deliverance of all that he wisely can do ; that he will never cast off a soul that truly loves him in any part of his dominions, or in any period of his administration ; and that he cannot possibly be displeased with, or effectively punish, any being who loves him in the present, or who repents of not having loved and obeyed him in the past.

Whether he will bring the whole human race, in this life or another, to moral harmony with himself, by the redemptive discipline of this life or another ; or, whether he will sooner or later terminate the existence of those who are not reclaimed ; or, whether he will doom such to conscious and continued suffering, during an immortal existence—are the questions in respect to which we are invited to give our opinions, with the reasons for holding them. These reasons are to be found in the testimony of the Scriptures as interpreted by the grammatical and historical methods which are accepted by all Protestant theologians, in connection with those ethical truths which shine by their own light, and by the light of which all communications from God to man must be interpreted, if, by their manifested truth, they are to be commended to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

NOAH PORTER.

II.

PRESIDENT PORTER'S calm and candid statement reveals the extent to which the doctrine of eternal punishment has, in the course of time, become attenuated. How revolting to him, as a theologian, must be the ferocious declamations of Tertullian! How irrational the words of Aquinas, the "angelic doctor" and saint, "Beati in regno coelesti videbunt poenas damnatorum, ut BEATITUDO ILLIS MAGIS COMPLACEAT!" It is only about a hundred years since Jonathan Edwards dropped his bituminous rhetoric upon the tender sensibilities of the unconverted; and to-day a great theologian consults the sensibilities of mankind, and does not so much as suggest the awful doom of which Edwards and his hearers were certain.

The concessions of modern theology are fatal to the vulgar doctrine. That doctrine requires the active suffering, intense, and for an indefinite period, of all who do not accept the regenerating offices of the Holy Spirit, through Christ. The condemnation is the inevitable result of depravity. Utter depravity involves utter destruction. Annihilation would logically meet the conditions of the case; but annihilation carries no terrors to careless minds. To multitudes it would be welcomed as a boon. The doctrine of annihilation, therefore, was never popular in the Church. The curse pronounced on Cain, that he should *not* die, that no man should kill him, that he should live to suffer, was pronounced against recusant humanity. The dogma of hell became the accepted belief. To admit that "punishment is impossible to one who is not conscious of ill-desert, and does not accept it as just;" that punishment is possible only so long as one is displeased with himself, and knows that God is displeased with him and *for cause*; that "we can suffer the keenest form of punishment only so long as we retain and reassert the wicked purpose or the wicked act"—is to introduce purely rational conceptions which destroy the very soul of the theological scheme, assuming, as that does, the *unmoral*, if not the *immoral*, nature of man. To start from such premises is to make rapidly toward Unitarianism and enter on the high-road out of Christianity. The *irrationality* of the doctrine of endless punishment is its strong-

hold in the ordinary "Evangelical" mind; so that the introduction of moral ideas overthrows or, rather, undermines it.

The doctrine in question can be argued only on *theological* grounds. That is to say, the reasoning must be by a species of algebraic sign, certain unknown, abstract quantities being assumed as points of departure; the contention being wholly in the air. The theologian posits God as a personal being, intelligent and free; with an intellect to devise, a heart to love, and a will to choose; a being of perfect moral goodness, unspotted holiness, and perfect love. He posits man as a moral being, personal and free, possessing all the endowments which are requisite for responsible activity; a being who assents to the excellence of duty, and imposes duty on himself as the supreme law of his inner and outward activity. The theologian next assumes the existence of a moral relation between these beings, and proceeds to reason on the basis of such relation. To one who hesitates to admit either one of the three cardinal propositions above stated, the reasoning is inconclusive and even impertinent; and none but theologians do admit them. The doctrine of the future damnation of the unconverted and unregenerate belongs to the ecclesiastical system of Christendom. Its practical application has been in the hands of priests; its speculative justification has been in the charge of theologians, whose sphere of thought is limited by the exactions of dogma. The practical application of the doctrine becomes impossible the moment the ethics of the clergy give place to the ethics of social life; the speculative justification of it becomes impossible the moment the abstractions of the scholastic give place to the facts of the observer. The human conscience abolishes the practice; the human intelligence abolishes the theory. Another set of "axioms" is laid down, and the process of demonstration moves in an opposite direction; not toward Universalism, which adopts the theological method diluted by sentimental considerations; not toward atheism, which in these latter days describes the anti-theological method, with a dogmatic prejudice against positive beliefs; but toward rationalism, which endeavors to understand what the moral order of the world actually is.

The scientific mind (using the term "scientific" in its large, genuine sense, as describing love of *knowledge* as distinguished from love of *theory*, and by "knowledge" understanding *all* knowl-

edge, not the knowledge of material things alone)—the scientific mind entertains no conception of future punishment whatever. To its apprehension, "Satan" is an empty figure of speech; "hell" a rhetorical flourish; "retribution," "satisfaction," "punishment," picture-language, which, perhaps, contains no meaning—which, at all events, must be subjected to honest examination before being allowed to pass for anything of value. The mythology of Christianity must take its chance with every other mythology, and give an account of itself to the rational thinker, whose respect for truth resents the imposition upon him of fictions, however dignified or venerable they may be, and who consigns to the limbo of "spoiled phraseology" all dogmas and terms that have not solid substances beneath them. Matthew Arnold goes so far as to put the words "God" and "immortality" in this dilemma; it is certainly not going very far to put "hell" and "damnation" there.

An orthodox preacher of New York was lately understood to say that, apart from the Scriptures, the Christian doctrine of future punishment was indefensible; which is an abandonment of the theological and ethical ground for the exegetical. What clear mind can fail to see that this is virtually an abandonment of the doctrine? For the authority of Scripture, by the admission of President Porter, stands "in connection with those ethical truths which shine by their own light, and by the light of which all communications from God to man must be interpreted."

The Bible is simply a book, or a collection of books—a literary phenomenon, to be read critically, judiciously, intelligently, as other writings are read. Its texts are not facts of Nature, but statements of opinion, collocations of ordinary words. The value of them as statements cannot be taken in advance of investigation, but must be discovered by the application of rational principles. A sentence like this, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," derives no authority from its position in a New Testament writing, or from its being put into the mouth of Jesus. It is like a bowlder on the surface of a meadow, which the geologist explains by tracing its history and origin to some remote formation of rock. If the text just quoted, or any text of like tenor, can be traced to Babylon, and ultimately to the Persian dualism which was im-

ported into Palestine by the returning captives, then it deserves as much consideration as the Persian theory of dualism deserves—as much, and no more. It is of the same stuff with the original formation, from which it is a fragment. The believers in dualism will treat it with respect, not on account of its incidental location, but on account of its organic texture. The disbeliever in dualism may regard it as a curiosity, but will not permit pious prejudices to convert the mass of porphyry into an idol. Whatever, in Scripture, conforms to reason, will be received as true so long as the conformity lasts; whatever, in Scripture, falls out with reason, will be discarded as erroneous so long as the discrepancy exists. To assume the authority of Scripture, and then torture its statements till they gasp out an agonized acquiescence in the inquisitor's creed, is a practice which the uniform custom of universal Christendom cannot make respectable. Thus, neither in its ethical nor its exegetical aspects is the dogma of eternal punishment tenable.

O. B. FROTHINGHAM.

III.

THE Catholic Church teaches that there is a hell, and that therein reprobate angels and lost men are eternally punished. The Church has made no positive definition as to the locality of hell, nor as to the exact nature, quality, and intensity, of the pains inflicted by the justice of God. Two things are certainly to be believed by every Catholic: first, that there is a hell, and, secondly, that the spirits and souls condemned are in eternal suffering. Such has been the constant teaching of the Church from the beginning.

Symbolic declarations are found in the Athanasian Creed, which every one must believe in order to salvation. "They that have done good works shall go into eternal life, but they that have done evil into everlasting fire." The doctrine of Origen and others, who held that "the punishments of the demons and the wicked were temporary," was condemned by the Fifth General Council, A. D. 553.

The Fourth Lateran Council declares: "All shall rise with their bodies, that they may receive according to their works.

Those who have done evil shall with the devil receive eternal pain, and those who have done good shall with Christ obtain perpetual glory."

Benedict XII., in his "Constitutions," defines "that, according to the ordinance of God, the souls of those who depart in deadly sin descend immediately after death into hell, where they are tormented with infernal pains."

The tradition of the Church and the constant expression of her faith have been conveyed in the very language of the sacred Scriptures. We allude to certain texts which have ever been interpreted by her according to their plain and literal meaning. It is a significant fact that our blessed Lord himself has seen fit to speak of the terrible punishments of the lost in terms which can hardly be misunderstood. He who is mercy incarnate has used the strongest language upon this fearful subject: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into *everlasting fire*, which was prepared for the devil and his angels." In these words the eternal joy of the just is placed in parallel with the unending sorrow of the lost. As the one is eternal, so of necessity is the other. "These shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting" (St. Matthew xxv. 41, 46). Nothing can be plainer than the words of this exhortation of our Lord: "It is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into *unquenchable* fire; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished. For every one shall be salted with fire" (St. Mark ix. 42-47).

The Church also teaches that there are deadly sins, for which there can be no forgiveness after this life; and, if there be no place for pardon, then the punishment for such sins must be without end. "He that shall speak against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in the world to come" (St. Matthew xii. 32). "He that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost shall bear his fan in his hand; he shall gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire" (St. Matthew iii. 12).

The voice of the Christian fathers is unanimous in the expression of this teaching of Jesus Christ. It is to be found in their strong condemnation of the error of Origen and others, who taught that at some future time the pains of the devils and the

wicked might have an end. Such an error was condemned as heretical by the universal Church.

According to the Catholic doctrine, the pain of hell is twofold. There is a pain of loss and a pain of sense, answering to the twofold evil of sin. As in sin there is the aversion of the soul from God and the turning to creatures, so in the final punishment of the wicked the will of the reprobate is carried to its fearful end. God is withdrawn, and all that is left of created things becomes the source of torment.

The pain of loss consists in the privation of eternal beatitude, of the beatific vision and all the consequent bliss which God has prepared for his elect. This deprivation is eternal and final, and is a torture which only the lost can comprehend. The pain of sense proceeds from the direct inflictions of the Divine justice which bear upon the souls and bodies of the damned. There is the prison of hell from which there is no escape. There is the undying worm of remorse. There is the society of the impious and the demons. And there is, as the principal torment, the eternal fire to which power is given to act upon spirit and matter, and to burn and not consume. Although there is no solemn definition of the Church determining the fire of hell to be real and material, nevertheless such is the common opinion, from which no Catholic can safely depart. Thus Suarez says: "The certain and catholic opinion is that the fire of hell, which is prepared for the devil and his angels, is a true and proper corporeal fire." And Estius uses these words: "It is sufficiently evident that the doctrine which teaches that the fire is corporeal by which the demons and the damned, either before the judgment without their bodies, or afterward with them, are punished, is so common and universal in the Church that it cannot be denied without temerity." "That the fire of hell," says Petavius, "is corporeal and material, all theologians, yea all Christians, believe, though this be not as yet defined by any decree of the Church."

This belief is in accordance with the words of our Lord, who certainly did not use the word *fire* in a figurative sense, nor employ language likely to deceive.

In the flames of hell all shall be punished according to their deserts, and, as far as the *essential* pain of the reprobate is con-

cerned, there can be no mitigation nor cessation. "The smoke of their torments shall ascend up forever and ever."

Catholic theologians find this doctrine to be in full accord with right reason, though the revelation of God can never be opposed by any true logical argument.

There ought to be some proportion between the fault and its punishment. Sin has an infinite malice, and an eternal punishment alone is adequate to it.

Again, the reprobate who dies in deadly transgression sins for eternity, and as far as he can turns from God forever. He ought, therefore, to be punished forever. Thus St. Gregory says, "It belongs to the great justice of the Judge, that they should never be without punishment, who in this life were never willing to be without sin."

And, lastly, it is necessary that God should establish a sufficient sanction for the observation of his laws. Eternal pain is the only sanction which either justifies his own attributes or operates as a warning to the wayward wills of men.

THOMAS S. PRESTON.

IV.

PRESIDENT PORTER, in his admirable and irenic opening of this discussion, makes it very difficult, for one who follows him upon the so-called "liberal" side, to take up an antagonistic or even a different position. I must frankly and gratefully confess that I could not ask a better summary of my own views than is presented in the last paragraph but one of his paper. If orthodoxy accepts the general positions laid down in Dr. Porter's statement of the case, and admits the conclusions he draws from them, there can no longer be any serious dispute, among spiritual and Christian men of any school of theology, upon the subject of eternal punishment. Wishing to promote agreement, and to advance and encourage the benignant influence of such views as Dr. Porter represents and advocates, I could almost wish that those who have hitherto represented the milder or more liberal view of the Divine government in its penal aspects would content themselves with indorsing and enforcing Dr. Porter's statement, and avoid

prejudicing its general acceptance, by adding to it doubtful speculations or pushing it to needless extremes.

If I may be permitted to speak for Unitarians (and I would do so with a full sense of having no right to express any but my own opinions as a life-long minister of that branch of the Christian Church), I say that we believe in eternal punishment, in the only sense in which President Porter seems to believe in it, i. e., in punishment limited by no definite boundary in *time* or eternity, beyond which it cannot extend; in punishment that will last as long as sin lasts, and will be eternal if sin is eternal; and that we believe, as he seems to believe, that the mere event of death and a change in our spirit's vesture will not alter our moral and spiritual conditions, or change the personal dispositions of a holy moral Sovereign and kind Father toward his subjects and children. In our opinion, God is love; but infinite love is love equally compounded of justice and mercy, holiness and benevolence, if rather they do not each imply the other in their perfect form. Honoring moral, intellectual, and spiritual freedom, as we specially have done, we ought to be the last to expect, *at any stage of human existence*, any interference with them by the Divine Omnipotence, in order to force an unmoral happiness upon any of his spiritual offspring. We confess that our philosophy of man's perfect moral freedom casts very solemn and threatening shadows upon the future of willful and impenitent transgressors. We do not see how men can be made holy against their wills, or be less than miserable, so long as they will not be holy; and our observation and experience of human willfulness in this world does not encourage us to hope that it may not continue for indefinite and practically dateless periods in new states of being. Fools alone make a mock at sin.

What we have hitherto objected to in the creed of orthodoxy, on the subject of eternal punishment, was the alleged finality of human fate, as determined by the state of the soul at the moment of death. It is needless to state what has been the general view of the Church, or what continues to be the popular view. This life has been considered to be mainly a state of probation, and the only state. Unitarians reject both ideas. With them life is not, here or anywhere, mainly a state of probation, but a state of education and discipline; and, still more, a state of *being for its*

own sake. We can conceive no state of human existence, that is, of finite spiritual existence, which shall be different in these respects from the present. We have entered on immortal life already, in sharing the nature of our Creator, and are already under the operation and sway of the eternal laws that govern spirits in all conceivable worlds. There is much to awe and oppress us in the operation of eternal moral and spiritual laws, as we observe their working here; much in the government of the Divine Being, in spite of its general benignity, that is stern and uncompromising, judged by his providence over human souls in their earthly lot; and surely we cannot, with our reverence for the freedom of the will and the free play of spiritual laws, be among those who think moral evil, with its suffering and its penalties, will be forcibly terminated by a fiat of Divine benevolence at any future date.

We object to the old orthodox view of the finality of human probation at death, as lacking probability, as disregarding our present experience of God's government and the constitution of man's spirit. Moreover, while it seems awfully threatening to those who are inclined to evil and are likely to be lost, it seems relaxing of moral and spiritual obligations toward those who expect to be saved. It is a doctrine too cruel for the worst, too flattering for the best!

President Porter has stated the relations of the moral to the exegetical side of the question with great fairness. The moral, dating from our nature, has precedence and superior jurisdiction, if any seeming or real conflict arises between conscience and Scripture. We accept this as exactly our own view. If we are to continue to claim the name of Christians we must continue to believe that the testimony of the records of our faith is not contradictory of the evidence of the moral reason. If it were proved such, we should be compelled to abandon Christianity, so far as it claims to be founded on the New Testament. We believe the general testimony of the New Testament to be in full accord with the testimony of man's moral nature, in regard to the issues of the Divine government. It is not to be denied that pictorial phrases, parables, and special texts, are to be found there, which, taken by themselves, seem to favor not only the doctrine of endless punishment in the popular sense, but, just as plainly, the ex-

istence of a material hell, and a personal devil. But as the literal force of these statments obliges us to accept the conclusion that this earth is the *seat* of the final judgment, and that Christ is coming in person, to judge the nations, we must leave it to those who are willing to accept the responsibility of maintaining these now generally discarded notions, to complain of *our* departure from the letter, in putting only a spiritual meaning upon any portion of these pictorial passages.

Again, we are not among those who wish to eliminate a personal God, in the exercise of a holy will, from the question of eternal punishment. If the free, conscious personality of God is to be used in support of the doctrine of *punishment*, considered as distinct from the natural retributive consequences of moral evil or sin, it is still more important to be insisted on as the ground of hope or even confidence that God's personal freedom, as it projected humanity into existence, did not launch it upon a voyage of wreck and ruin for the majority, or for even the least minority, of its representatives. Is it consistent with our notions of justice and goodness, that Omniscience should voluntarily bring into an existence, which he foresaw would be infinitely miserable, a single spiritual being, made in his image and called his child? It is because I believe in a personal God, who is responsible to his creatures for exercising his power justly and benignantly, even more than they are responsible to him for their sins, that I trust and believe that he will ultimately redeem the whole race and their future, in a manner that will not violate human freedom, or injure any moral law, or reproach Divine holiness—perhaps, by the experience of suffering; perhaps, by the influence of redeemed souls; perhaps, by the release of spirits from physical bonds and the corresponding increase of their susceptibility to moral influences; perhaps, by an improved social, moral atmosphere, and more favorable conditions, which enter into our conceptions of a future life: and not only the earth and its future inhabitants from the dominion of selfishness and sin, but all the worlds and all the souls in them, from the moral and spiritual ruin which it seems to me a God who wishes to be known as a Father, and who has been represented by such a Son as Jesus, must have for his ultimate purpose, and needs for his justification as a Creator.

The immediate salvation, at death, of all souls, by a Divine

fiat, irrespective of moral and spiritual state or character, seems to me equally unscriptural, immoral, and improbable. I cannot say that anybody now holds this view whose opinion is entitled to respect. The absolute and final condemnation of any to hopeless and everlasting misery, at the close of mortal life, from either never having heard or from not having accepted the alleged conditions of mercy offered by Jesus Christ, I think is not the faith of instructed theologians, acquainted with psychological and ethical truths—which shine by their own light—in any branch of the Church. The notion is now confined either to the last survivors of an effete or dying theological system, that was not exercised with ethical distinctions, however it may have been with dialectical subtleties; or else to the popular mind, still in the bondage of the letter, and treated by its friends and ministers, often with entire sincerity, with the melodramatic dogmas that are ecclesiastically effective without being spiritually efficacious. Hell and heaven, in their old objective forms, equally coarse in their appeal to selfish hope and fear, are not going to give up their hold on the popular mind, at any challenge of reason or a higher spirituality. But they will slowly die of the steady increase of moral and spiritual light, as phantoms fly before the rising sun that would resist all arguments in the dark. It would, for reasons of present policy, be a misfortune to have even the crude and coarse dogmas of Christendom pass away under any influences less than those which leave more truly impressive, restrictive, and inspiring notions of the Divine government, and of human fortunes, in their place.

I sum up my opinions on the subject by adopting the language of President Porter, near the close of his opening :

“Whatever representations we find of man’s weakness or depravity, or danger, whatever high-wrought pictures of God’s anger, or its continuance, we must hold fast to the primal truths which make God dear to our affections as our pitying Father, or venerable as our holy Judge. It is because we believe that God is morally perfect, that we assert that he would delight to receive honor and love from all his creatures, that he uses all the means for the triumph of goodness and the deliverance of all, that he wisely can do; that he will never cast off a soul that truly loves him, in any part of his dominions, or in any period of his admin-

istration; and that he cannot possibly be displeased with, or effectively punish, any being who loves him in the present, or who repents of not having loved and obeyed him in the past."

If this statement be accepted as the general summing up of learned and candid as well as profoundly Christian men, in the modern orthodox party, it will advance the question far above the cavils and protests of liberals, who mean to be Christians, and soon take the debate out of all circles, where it can be followed by sober or enlightened argument.

HENRY W. BELLOWES.

V.

God's revelation indicates great remedial processes to restore, enlighten, and guide the conscience. As Thomas Carlyle has somewhere said, "The old world knew nothing of conversion." The gospel of Christ brought in this, as the foundation of true hope and of life everlasting. Except men were converted, Christ pronounced their admission into his heavenly kingdom impossible. Reason in man, and providence around his daily steps, enlighten and develop the conscience. But the Scripture of God is the great standard of right and duty; to cherish, enlarge, and inform that conscience. The Spirit of God is proffered, in its plenitude of energies, to unfold and enforce those Scriptures. The manifest God, in Christ, is, in the highest, justest sense, the Word; the central theme of Scripture, and the embodiment and terrene manifestation of the Godhead. His atoning sacrifice is the availing oblation to cancel sin, and the basis of a free, sovereign, world-winning, and world-quelling grace.

The channel, through which this grace is accepted and becomes the basis and food of a new life, is faith. Just as the life of industry and traffic in the commercial world is credit, the faith of mortals in their neighbors—just as the animating principle of true patriotism, that makes a people great, is their trust in their fathers, and in their own present liberties, and in the high destinies of their children—so the grand bond, the sacred ligature, that binds the prodigal back again to the forfeited heritage, and to the wronged, deserted Father, is faith in the redeeming Brother, in the virtue of his availing sacrifice as the atoning Lamb that

taketh away the sin of the world, and in the certainty of his coming again as the inevitable judge of quick and dead. Faith is, thus regarded, the great moral gravitation that holds the spiritual world together, and binds it to the throne and heart of God. Unseen, as is gravitation in the material world, and yet, in its invisibility, mighty, pervasive, and indispensable; so faith, true trust in the true and trustworthy Jehovah, makes all real history, and all just science, and all genuine duty, and all real felicity, but a moral gravitation of the finite toward the Infinite, a loyal and loving reliance of man upon the Author, Upholder, and Arbiter of all being—in the Bible, his revelation—in the Christ, his embodiment—in the redemption he most graciously proffers—and in the judgment he most solemnly predicts.

Now, this Christ assured his hearers that, though heaven and earth might pass away, not one jot or tittle of the divine word should pass into oblivion and failure. Of the minute comprehensiveness of the last judgment, he bore testimony, when he said, that for "every idle word" should men give account in that day. And, under circumstances which by their contrast gave to the claim an awful impressiveness, he, when arraigned before the earthly judges who condemned him to death, warned them and each hearer in the throng, and each reader of the record in after-times, that they and we should all "see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven with great power and glory." With that insight into the heart which was proof of his divinity, Christ predicted the treason and fate of Judas, and called him "the son of perdition." It was the title afterward given by Paul in the Epistle to the Thessalonians to that Man of Sin who is to be destroyed with the brightness of Christ's coming. If some would interpret it as meaning in the case of Judas but "the lost son," must they not impart the same hope from the Holy One to the malign potentate "the Man of Sin" also? Christ said, too, of the false apostle that it were for him better had he never been born. If, after misery, however protracted, there should come to him a final restoration, could it be said of Judas, in this endless life supplementing long woe, that it was not a boon to have been born? And if Christ used words thus elastic and delusive, yet actually foreseeing and purposing the final bestowal of paradise upon his

betrayed, how could the Judge himself be absolved from the accusation of having employed nugatory and "vain words," though for every such word he had said men must expect to meet a reckoning? In one of the great penitential Psalms it is said of God that he will be justified when he *judgeth* (Psalm li. 4). The Epistle to the Romans (iii. 4) presents the same dread scene and sovereign under another but kindred aspect: that he shall overcome when *he is judged*. The Divine Ruler, gathering men and angels to the bar of his judgment, every culprit cited and left free to his defense, and every witness from the heights and the depths summoned, is himself to be judged; as the fullness of his knowledge and the equity of his dealings come into review and are made patent, alike to all who adore and to all who would fain impeach him. There have been earthly governors who would have been held universally to be competent, had not their actual tenure of office revealed their unsuspected weakness and defects.

Now, in his earthly ministry, our Lord used one word to describe the term of glory for the righteous, and the duration of woe for the ungodly. He represented the future abode of the holy with holy angels, and of the wicked with the revolted and fallen angels. If evil men are but, after the judgment, probationers for a final release, it seems a necessary inference that the fallen angels, their tempters and accomplices in wrong-doing, and their fellows in imprisonment, should also become partakers in their discharge from Tophet and their ultimate ascent to Paradise. Satan, of whom Christ saw only the fall, as hurled from heaven, must clamber and soar, at the last, back to the glory from which he had plunged, and an ascension, of which the Bible has no hint, must await the first revolter. But, in the case of fiends, where is the Divine incarnation and redemption in their behoof provided for; and inveterate and malignant as has been their impenitence, by what scheme of renovation and rescue is their pardon to be bought? Are a new Calvary and a new Pentecost in reserve for these coheritors of the doom to become coheritors of the blessedness reserved for the human "sons of perdition?" But the New Testament explicitly excepts this portion of apostate spirits from the benefits of Christ's assumption of a lower nature. "He took not on him the nature of angels."

Reference is had to the infinite benignity and compassion of our Lord for his murderers. But as he wept in beholding the city whence was to come the cry for his crucifixion, he deplored that his willingness to gather them into shelter had been limited by their unwillingness to be thus gathered and sheltered. They preferred the house to the Messiah, "the glory of that house"—the lifeless type to the life-giving antitype—and now that house was left to them "*desolate*." When risen from the grave, he declared that "all power in heaven and earth was now given to his hands." The terrible scenes of the overthrow and desolation of that fane and city and land, as Titus wrought them and as Josephus paints them, were, then, if the "true and faithful witness" spoke truly and trustworthily, a just vengeance, permitted and overruled in his administration of that "*power*" which grasped "*heaven and earth*" into the nail-pierced hand of the Crucified. The tears did not avert the wasting and the blasting by that Avenger, when pitilessly repelled as the Healer.

The word "damnation" has been so associated with profane misuse, that to some it seems harsh. Like its kindred term "condemnation," it is but the final utterance, as against guilt, of that "judgment" which is entwined with the whole structure of Divine revelation. In the banishment from Eden, in the scenes of the deluge, in the trials and deliverances of the patriarch of Uz, in the plagues visiting Egypt, Babylon, Nineveh, and Tyre, in the captivity and the return of the Jews, God's supervision and judicial character are kept prominent. Abraham, the father of the faithful, interceding for the plain, appeals to the God he served as "the judge of all the earth." Calamities, personal and national, are but his interlocutory judgments. In the sense of his appointment of the hour and scene of death to each one of us, he is spoken of as "the Judge at the door."

But the minor, preliminary exhibitions of the Divine justice do not exhaust, they merely foretold the fuller revelation of that sovereign equity upon a race risen in their entirety. And one of the apostolical epistles, found upon the later pages of the New Testament, cites prophecies, going as far back as the days of Enoch, a patriarch who preceded the deluge. As to the scope and scrutiny of the last judgment, Enoch describes it as taking in all ungodly deeds, and all the hard speeches of all

sinners. The words group the entire annals of humanity, as indexed in the revelations of the doomsday. The keys of hell and death are grasped by this potentate. When it is said of him that "he openeth and no man shutteth," the Church may exult in the way thus opened to the Father's house and heart. But, when it is followed by the words, "He shutteth and no man openeth," we may well bethink us of his own parables of the master of the house risen, and shutting to the door against applicants who knock vainly, for they come too late, and of the great gulf or chasm that parted Dives and Abraham, and which was not to be traversed; the season of probation past irrevocably, and the season of retribution inaugurated unalterably.

When, too, our Lord speaks of sin against the Holy Ghost, never to be forgiven, the assertion sweeps away much speculation as to openings of mercy and hope, beyond the last judgment. When he warns his disciples to fear not the earthly persecutors, who can only kill the body, and then, their powers exhausted, they can do nothing further, he appends the terrible words, but "fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew x. 28). Now, the word here used is the very term "*Gehenna*," which, because coined by the Jews from the valley of the son of Hinnom, the place for flinging out the litter of Jerusalem, it is contended can mean only a local and material destruction, where crawling vermin and smouldering fires offended every sense, as they consumed the offscourings of a great city. But it is a patent fact in the history of every tongue having a rich literature, that words, referring to tangible and local objects, in their first use, become, by their after-application, informed and surcharged with spiritual and comprehensive ideas, that far surpass the original root. The etymology of a word is but a treacherous guide as to its present sense and scope. The Parliament of Britain is the body in which their valued national constitution has garnered vast powers. It can make and shatter cabinets, acknowledge or overthrow a royal dynasty, equip armies, levies taxes, launches fleets, and dictates laws and policy for a wide and varied population, colonizing isles and shores all around the globe. Should one insist, however, on fixing Parliament's prerogatives, by tracing it to its etymology, it is found, in the Norman-French of the island's old lawyers, to mean merely a scene of speaking;

and, like the word *palaver*, which Portuguese discoverers lent to the dusky natives of Western Africa, its sole, legitimate sense is, long and large discussion. If a reformer arise claiming that, for himself and his fellow-Britons, the powers of Parliament should be cut down to bootless, limitless, and unpractical talk—as the etymology demands—would he be patiently heard? When our blessed Lord spoke of “*souls*” cast into Gehenna by the Divine vengeance, and one thinks of the elder Herod slaughtering the babes of Bethlehem, and then going to the audit beyond with this blood and his other crimes upon him, are we to construe the Saviour as declaring that the old Edomite’s soul, ruthless and guilt-sodden, was in some strange way to be put with his body, the kingly corpse and the immaterial soul, down amid the rotting, flaring piles in the valley of Hinnom—a cheap and light punishment for guilt so dire?

It was the last evidence our Lord adduced to the disciples of John, in proof of his own Messianic character, that “the poor had the gospel preached to them.” And the hold which Christ’s word takes upon these remains still one grand argument for the divinity of its origin; and so, too, the interpretation put upon the Bible by the plainer and less erudite membership of Churches affords often significant illustration as to the erroneousness or validity of certain opinions. Men and women, winning hardly a scant livelihood, with little leisure for wide reading, are yet often devout students of the Bible. Lord Bacon, in commenting upon the exposition of Scripture, prefers the sense which easily presents itself—like the wine crushed from the lighter touch of the wine-press—superior, as he thinks, to the later runnings, into which the flavor of grape-seeds and grape-skins penetrated. Now, such natural interpretations of Scripture are likely to be found in this class of unprejudiced students. From the earliest ages of the Church they have been loath to welcome the suggestions from time to time made, often by men of piety and genius, that hell was, perchance, transitory and paradise only permanent.

When the late John Stuart Mill declared of a God failing to meet certain of his requirements, that he, Mill, would challenge that God to send him, the recusant, to hell, the Christian readers of the defiance might well, with an old apostle, ask, “Nay but,

O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" God has not immediately smitten down those who thus "talked back" against the Infinitely True, the Infinitely Wise, and the Infinitely Good. The verdict of the ages has been more and more with the Holy One. His muteness against railing was not weakness or apathy, but a long-suffering mercy that delayed to strike, because it knew the full terrors of the retribution that must ultimately smite the abuse of a long-protracted and loving probation.

WILLIAM R. WILLIAMS.

VI.

UNDER the gospel, there is no dispute about the destiny of the righteous, that is, the truly penitent and believing; but the question that is more and more agitating the religious world relates exclusively to the wicked, that large, heterogeneous class of ignorant, vicious, ungodly people, in their innumerable grades of depravity—heathen, Mohammedan, nominally Christian, infidel, or atheist—who live in rebellion against God, or in alienation from him, and die as they have lived. What is to become of them?

I hardly need say how this question is answered. A few have accorded to them the "sad cure" of annihilation; a larger number has confidently remanded them to the mercy of God; while the great mass of the Church has delivered them over—some in sorrow of heart, some with cold indifference, and others with apparent satisfaction—to the endless torments of hell! But in the progress of our Christian civilization, through better thinking and broader sympathies, this last opinion has, within the past century, undergone great modifications. The doctrine of infant damnation has utterly disappeared from Protestant Christendom, though we recognize its traces in some existing creeds. The relative numbers of the lost and saved have been reversed, and, instead of the great majority of our race being damned, the severest school of orthodoxy now assures us that the number of the finally lost will be "very inconsiderable." Even hell and its horrors have not escaped this modifying process. An abyss of literal fire and brimstone, in which the wicked are burned, soul and body, without intermission and without end, is now seldom preached, and intelligent and candid men agree that "whatever high-wrought

pictures we find of God's anger, or its continuance, we must hold fast to the primal truths which make God dear to our affections as our pitying Father, or venerable as our holy Judge." So the old grounds of reason, on which the doctrine of endless punishment was formerly made to rest, have all been laid aside, and new, though not better ones, invented. Gradually, too, the proof-texts of the doctrine, with which the Bible was once thought to be studded, have become fewer and fewer, and generally with an ever-lessening force, till now learned men fail entirely to find it in the Old Testament, and many orthodox clergymen of scholarship and talents begin to doubt whether "everlasting punishment," in the New, is absolutely without end!

All this shows beyond question what are the tendencies of modern religious thought; and no one can fail to observe that the whole movement is in one direction. In nothing but its eternity is the doctrine of endless punishment to-day what it was a century ago, and even this is no longer held with the same undoubting confidence. The heart and the head of all the better portions of the Christian world accept it only under an avowed or tacit protest. Such is the result of a hundred years of controversy upon this subject!

This discussion, in the oldest and most influential periodical of its class in the country, will bring before the public two quite different schools of theology. Strangely enough, they both start professedly from common principles. Both believe in the one living and true God; both acknowledge the divine mission and infallible teachings of Christ; both accept the Holy Scriptures as containing a revelation of the Divine will and the character of the Divine government; and yet, in their interpretation of these fundamental facts and the issues of this government, they come to conclusions widely different, and, in some respects, antagonistic. I shall call one of these schools the Universalist, and the other, by courtesy, the Orthodox. The point of difference and antagonism between them, now under discussion, is simply the *eternity of sin*. The Universalist theology, which it is the design of this paper to exhibit and recommend, recognizes sin as a very evil and bitter thing, terrible in its character and consequences—the only evil, we may almost say, that we know. It is an evil, however, incidental to the development of free moral powers, and rela-

tively transient in its nature, and is ultimately to be overcome and wholly eliminated from the universe of God, by those retributive and redemptive processes, revealed in Scripture and manifested in providence, which the Infinite Wisdom and Love hold in their hand, and know so well how to employ, and which they will employ in a way perfectly suited to man as a free moral being, without destroying his personality or violating his freedom.

The Orthodox theology, on the contrary, holds, if I understand it, that sin is, in its very nature, or is to become, by some divine appointment, absolutely endless, and in a portion of God's moral creation, and perhaps with ever-increasing malignity and force, is to exist and reign through all eternity, followed by a train of woes and horrors which the human mind labors in vain to conceive.

The Universalist theology has the advantage, it will be seen, of ending in a general harmony, while the Orthodox ends in an eternal discord; the former in unity, the latter in actual dualism; two empires, as Augustine taught, standing side by side; one, that of Christ, the other, that of Satan, both equally indestructible and equally enduring! To be self-consistent, this system should begin with dualism, as it ends. Then moral evil would have an eternal ground, and be self-existent, as goodness is, and be enthroned in Satan, as goodness is in God. But such a theory of the moral universe, common as it was in the ancient world, breaks down, under the light of reason, from the very necessities of the case, and is refuted and overthrown completely by revelation. There is, there can be, but one God, and he is good. Sin is not "from everlasting," as God is. It had a beginning, and may therefore have an end—nay, must have an end—unless we are willing to adopt the absurdity that unspotted holiness and perfect love can will its infinite perpetuation!

Sin, so far as we know, is purely our own work. God could never ordain it, and never establish any laws to promote it, without denying himself. When he made man in his own image, he made him a personal being, and in that, rational and moral. But, to be moral, man must be free; and in a finite being freedom is inconceivable only as it involves the *possibility* of sin. Side by side with these transcendent gifts stands forever this unavoidable peril. For this possibility let God, if you please, be held accountable: that sin has become actual is solely our fault. Here

is at once our dignity and danger. But, in contemplating the danger, let us not forget that it is the sole condition of virtue, and all the moral goodness and greatness, the love, the self-sacrifice, that have thrown their glory over our race, and all the happiness, past, present, or future, that deserves the name. In making such creatures as we are, with all our liability to sin, God was wanting in neither wisdom nor goodness. Hypothetically, it is true, a being morally free *may* continue to sin on and on forever; and it is the constant effort of our modern orthodoxy, as it is its urgent necessity, to show that it will actually do so. Rev. Mr. Cook delighted a Boston audience of this school with a series of propositions claiming to prove that, under irreversible natural law, there may exist in the universe *eternal sin*; and even President Porter suggests that it may be a law of our being that, when once we sin, we overleap a barrier along the path of goodness and life, which we shall never effectually desire to recross, and that every underlying purpose which we call sinful may, in its very nature, be permanent and eternal. Has God, then, so carefully provided in the laws of our nature for the eternity of sin, and thus for our final damnation? Let us hope, for the honor of his name, that the moral economy of the universe has not been ordained by Infinite Wisdom and Holiness, chiefly in the interest of evil, to multiply and perpetuate it, and finally to crown it with immortality. If, as we are assured by reason and revelation, God sees the end from the beginning, and if, as Dr. Dwight said, and as the Bible said long before him, "the whole moral character of God is love, an intense and eternal flame of uncompounded good-will," is it to be believed that he ever has created, or ever can create, a single human soul, whose existence shall prove, even through its own fault, an endless and infinite curse? Nor does it avail to say that the sinner, "if left to himself," would never return to truth and goodness. The very supposition is inadmissible. God never intended to leave the sinner to himself, and could not do so without renouncing the moral responsibilities he willingly assumed in his creation. If he foresaw that he could not govern and would not save the sinning soul, that was reason enough that he should not create it. Men habitually speak of God's *permitting* sin. He respects the powers which he himself has conferred, but he permits no sin with approval, concession, or indifference. He protests

against it; he arms against it the sinner's own conscience, and menaces it with righteous punishment.

"The chief end of man is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever." So says a half-forgotten catechism, which in this taught better than it knew. This is what man was made for, the final cause of his creation. Nor has God through all the ages ever relinquished this original purpose, or for a moment lost sight of it. Slowly it may seem, but surely, he is carrying forward his work toward its completion, and in the end an admiring and grateful universe will acknowledge that he has done all things well. To this grand result is tending the whole government of God. Justice and mercy, law and gospel, have but one object, and are alike overarched by infinite love.

The final victory of good over evil is not only the dictate of right reason, but is also the doctrine of revelation. Sin had no sooner entered the world, than there came, as Hengstenberg says, "the consolatory promise that the dominion of sin, and of the evil arising from sin, shall not last forever." That promise was repeated in various forms and with increasing light till the Messiah, to whom it pointed, finally appeared, and no candid reader can fail to recognize the tone of universality running through the whole Bible. The seed of the woman was to bruise the serpent's head, and so destroy his power; in the seed of Abraham all the families of the earth were to be blessed; all nations whom God has made were to come and worship before him; all souls are God's. In the New Testament this is still more striking. "God so loved the world;" "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!" "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost;" "He gave himself a ransom for all;" "He tasted death for every man;" "He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world." Under the very shadow of the cross, Christ said: "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself;" a declaration of wonderful scope and power, and as wonderfully slurred over by the commentators. St. John testified that "the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world;" and St. Paul that he has "highly exalted him and given him a name that is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should

bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

Through repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, souls are being gathered into his kingdom ; and the apostle assures us that he must continue his redemptive work till he has subdued all things to himself, when, sin having been abolished and death destroyed, the kingdom shall be delivered up to the Father, that GOD MAY BE ALL IN ALL.

THOMAS J. SAWYER.

VII.

IN closing this discussion, I shall give my reasons for holding that the doctrine of eternal punishment is not offensive to the moral reason, so as to require us to deny that Christ has taught it, or to affirm that, if he has, Christianity cannot be from God.

I must assume the fact of sin. The participants in this discussion, with perhaps one exception, all assume this. Mr. Frothingham uses words in a very strange fashion, or else in a sense from which I must earnestly dissent, when he asserts that "none but *theologians* admit" that God is personal and good ; that man is personal and responsible, and that a moral relation exists between them. I assure him that it is not as a *theologian* that I "posit" these truths, but that, when I assert them, "I speak as a man," and with the majority of men as they utter their convictions in language, and enshrine them in literature, and recognize them in society, and imply them in law, and embody them in institutions. There may be a scanty few whose wishes, borrowing wings of their imaginations, fly so high above realities as to fail to discern them as they are, or whose factitious or abnormal culture "consigns to" the limbo of "spoiled phraseology" the most sacred relations of human nature. Mr. Frothingham must speak as a theologian, and not as a man, when he would have us believe that "the moral order of the world" to "the rational thinkers" involves neither freedom, nor responsibility, nor retribution.

A sinful will is the most dangerous and destructive of all evil forces. It is self-relying, self-justifying, and self-perpetuating. It gathers new force if let alone. It rises in sturdy re-

sistance if opposed—its one or many passions cruel, debasing, and malignant. Now and then a human being exemplifies what this evil is in its nature and tendencies. The houses in which such men dwell, and the places in which they congregate, are in common parlance known as hells, in sober truth and with horrid significance.

And yet sin exists by the permission of God. In Dr. Sawyer's language, "he respects the powers which himself has conferred," at the same time that he is most opposed to the abuse of them in sin, and desires most earnestly that men should abandon it. Why, then, does he suffer sin to be? The only answer that can be given is found in the freedom which is essential to personality. God cannot exercise personal influences except with persons, and personality involves the possibility of perversion. "For this possibility let God, if you please, be responsible," says Dr. Sawyer; "that sin has become actual is our fault." But if sin is a fact, and God is good in permitting it, and in punishing it, who shall say that he may not be good should he permit a person to continue to exist, and to continue to sin and to suffer? Dr. Bellows asserts that God would dishonor his own personality, should he "voluntarily bring into an existence, which he foresaw would be infinitely miserable, a single spiritual being made in his image." Dr. Sawyer says that God could not leave the sinner finally to himself, "without renouncing the moral responsibilities he willingly assumed in his creation." I would submit that those who concede that God can permit the sin which he hates, and the sinner whom he must punish, to exist at all, cannot assert that God is morally bound not to create a being who he foreknows will sin forever. We may not know why God creates such a being, but we have no such moral insight as warrants us in saying that no reasons are possible which justify him in doing it. The existence of sin in any being and for any time is the one comprehensive mystery. This is expressed in the problem, How could God create a being, and suffer him to sin at all? When this has been conceded to be consistent with the Creator's goodness, we cannot assert, on ethical grounds, that he might not create a being who he foresees would sin and suffer forever. All of which we are ethically sure is, that he detests the sin, and that he has made the creature capable of sinning for some other

reason than because he desires that he should sin. Had Drs. Bellows and Sawyer been asked, before sin existed, whether a perfect God could make a being in his own image who would dishonor that image by sin, they would have said "No—a thousand times no!"—by the logic which they use against the possibility of continued sin in the kingdom of God.

I cannot resist the impression that, when Drs. Sawyer and Bellows are confronted with sin as a fact, they explain it by a theory of freedom; but, when they face the possibility of sin, they resolve it by a theory of development or fate, which makes the fact of sin a blessing.

But, leaving these *a priori* considerations, let us take a nearer view of the Christian doctrine of the present life, and its relations to another. Dr. Bellows objects to viewing this life as "a state of probation," which is brought to a "finality" by the act of God. I agree with him that this life is "a state of education and of discipline," if I may add, "for a race which needs to be recovered or redeemed," and provided I may emphasize the truth that Christ in his life and death is the central force, who disciplines sinful men to a perfected character in a perfect life. This theory of human life is taught by Christ himself in his conversation with Nicodemus: "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but might have everlasting life." This solves the enigma of human life, with its sorrows and joys, its smiles and tears. This is the key to human history, whether of the observant human being, or of the great evolutions of national and race life, that are directed by Christ's agency, toward the redemption of the earth.

But education, if it trains and disciplines, may also test and divide; indeed, it must, if the education is moral and its subjects are free, and are capable of resisting its benign influences. A time may properly come when such influences may end, because they are proved to be useless. Christ declares this will be true of some. In the conversation referred to, which says that our human life is warmed and cheered by light and love from himself, he says there are those who reject him, and are judged, and "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."

But might not this education be resumed in another life? It is certainly conceivable that it should, and under circumstances such as Dr. Bellows describes, which would seem to be far more favorable than those which fall to the lot of many in the present life. It is certain that it would be furnished were there promise of better results. Christian influences reach farther than many men conceive of. Christian civilization and redemption can win hearts in strange ways to the germ and promise of a better life. He that gives a cup of cold water, with any Christian aspiration, will not lose his reward. We can judge very imperfectly of the results that actually come to many on whom the recovering influences of the present life may seem to have been worse than lost. Of this we are certain, that not a seedcorn, that has under genial influences been warmed into the first movings of germinant life, shall be overlooked by the loving Redeemer, who is also the scrutinizing Judge, but every such germ shall sprout and grow under the favoring climate of the better land.

Nor can it be urged that faith, as the condition of life, is too narrow to satisfy our ethical judgment, inasmuch as the possibility of faith in Christ is necessarily very restricted. I do not undertake to defend the narrow dogmatism on this point of many so-called Christian theologians, or the practical uncharities of any ecclesiastical bigots. But I may assume that the only possible condition of entrance into Christ's happy future life is the possession of the elements of a character in sympathy with its atmosphere. This sympathy is, for practical purposes, properly and adequately described as tested by faith, either actual or implicit, in Christ as a person, conspicuously in the relations in which he is prominently known. Hence the test, "He that believeth is saved, and he that rejects is condemned." It is obvious that this test can in form be applied only to those who know of him. The Master himself taught most clearly that many who have never heard of him should be gathered into his kingdom. It is safe to concede that many, who have heard him so badly represented as to reject the caricature of his person, in the spirit of the faith in his real character are in heart true believers.

Then, too, when the future life begins, every man will see Christ as he is, and the sight of him may of itself bring a *finality* to his character and destiny as it discovers each man fully to him-

self. They that pierced him shall mourn, but not if, when they see him, they mourn that they pierced him. The next life may be another probation, in that, by its first revelations, it shall make everything clear which was dark, and bring out in vivid lines that moral and spiritual truth which the soul shall accept with sympathizing joy, or reject with sinful perverseness; and, as it accepts or rejects, shall know its own character and its just award. It is certain that, unless this conviction of justice is produced, there is no hell worthy to be feared, and no heaven worthy to be sought for. The opening scenes of the next life may be at once the soul's second probation and its final judgment. Christ may be manifested to every awakening spirit in the same indivisible instant as the accepted or rejected Saviour, and as the rewarding or condemning Judge. Whether the wakening be gradual or abrupt, whether the manifestations be as sudden as lightning at noonday or as gentle as the insensible approaches of the dawn, the soul may as unerringly and as justly find its own place in the spiritual world as after ages of purgatorial discipline.

"The Dream of Gerontius," by John Henry Newman, is an attempt to elevate the doctrine of purification by literal fire into the dignity of a spiritual operation, wrought by the manifestation of Christ as a person to the disembodied spirit. In the words of his guiding angel, who conducts him to Christ—

"The eager spirit has darted from my hold,
And, with the intemperate energy of love,
Flies to the dear feet of Emmanuel;
But, ere it reach them, the keen sanctity,
Which, with its effluence, like a glory, clothes
And circles round the Crucified, has seized
And scorched, and shriveled it; and now it lies
Passive and still before the awful throne.
Oh, happy, suffering soul! for it is safe—
Consumed, yet quickened by the glance of God."

The scene was, doubtless, suggested by the words in the vision of John, "And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead." These words may be no more than literal truth to those who bring out of the present life a character that in its aims and spirit is antagonistic to the King and Judge of the life that is to be. The effect of his manifested presence on those who love and honor him prevailingly, however feebly and inconsistently, is

more nobly conceived than by Newman in those other words of John: "It doth not appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Whatever there is of earthly soil, or that is inconsistent with the perfect life—whatever of wood, or hay, or stubble—shall be consumed by the brightness of Christ's spotless purity, "but the man himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire."

But we are using figurative language. Doubtless we are. Every man must use figurative language who thinks or writes of the future life. This brings up the ethical objections which are urged against the terrific sensuous imagery that abounds in the New Testament. These delineations, we know, have been very generally interpreted in their literal sense; and out of them painters and poets and preachers have wrought fearful and even horrible pictures, which have either stupefied or bewildered the young and the sensitive, and have not infrequently weakened or destroyed the spiritual comfort and effect which they were designed to symbolize. Jeremy Taylor and Jonathan Edwards are examples of those whose genius and piety have not preserved them from grossly erring in this fashion. Against the imagery which we find in the Scriptures, when taken as imagery, no man who has a moderate share of the historic sense or of historic candor can make any show of objection. Many of these images are taken from those agents of terror which are familiar to the race: fire, tempest, darkness, chains of darkness, weeping, wailing, etc. Not a few are peculiar to the Hebrew theocracy, its history and its prophetic symbolism. They did not offend the ethical sense of the men to whom, nor the times when, they were used. They enforce spiritual truth which is important for all times concerning the issues of another life. The great teacher and his apostles who used them are no more responsible for misconceptions of their import in this particular than for the countless other errors and misconceptions under which Christianity itself has been well-nigh materialized and destroyed. That eternal punishment has been enforced by symbols and words which have been unwisely and untruly used is no reason for rejecting the doctrine to which every man's conscience assents as possibly true. *It is not the eternity but the severity of the punishment which these images illustrate and enforce.*

Now and then a purgatorial restorationist, or even a preacher of annihilation, is especially offensive for his use of these literal pictures of horror. Not a few ill-instructed and exciting preachers content themselves with the use of sensational imagery to excite alarm, and overlook the fearful spiritual possibilities of sin, and the certain horrors of which even the present life furnishes such terrible foreshowings.

Mr. W. R. Greg, in his "Enigmas of Life," chapter vii., "Elsewhere," has entered a passionate protest against Christian theologians for their material delineations of heaven and hell. And yet, after concluding this protest, he gives a theory of possible, nay, of certain, retribution, which, in its horrors and joys, excites far more serious terror and hope than any of those pictures by theologians which so shock and repel him. He says: "Surely, surely, it is not impossible to imagine a future world in such force and coloring as shall be easy and natural to realize, as shall be not only *possible* to believe, but *impossible* to disbelieve. If the soul is destined for an existence after death, then (unless a miracle is worked to prevent it) that existence must be one of retribution to the sinful, and of purgatorial suffering to the frail and feeble soul." And he justifies his thesis by the powerful ethical portraits that follow of the hell and the heaven which the wicked and the good cannot but create for themselves, under the revelations and influences of their future spiritual existence. He overlooks one element only, which Christianity and Christ can supply, that of help and hope from a loving person, who awakens gratitude and love to himself, and thus secures victory over sin, and consequently over every form of death. This is the moral "miracle" which proves Christianity to be needed and to be divine.

I have confined myself to the ethical aspects of this doctrine, as the necessary preliminary to an unbiased interpretation of the declarations of Christ and the apostles. While it is important that Christian believers and preachers should be agreed in their interpretation upon this point, it is still more important that they should maintain those ethical views of the relation of character to salvation, which can make Christianity a hope of anything worth caring for, or "the endless life" which it promises a "power" for man's real redemption.

NOAH PORTER.